

DEAR ABBY

Write to Dear Abby online at [dearabby.com](http://dearabby.com) or by mail at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069



**Dear Abby:** My wife and I have dear friends, one of whom has been diagnosed with untreatable cancer. The doctors told him to go home and maximize his quality of life. The first step he took was to completely cut us out.

We had been friends for years. They watched the big football games with us at our house. When he was diagnosed, I was the first person outside of his family he called. They stood up with us when we renewed our vows. I have cut cords of firewood for them. We traveled together.

Recently, the wife posted on Facebook that when undergoing trials you find out who your friends really are. We have been tossed aside like worn-out shoes.

My question is, when he passes, if we learn about it, would it be appropriate to attend the funeral to say goodbye to this man we dearly love and offer our condolences to the widow?

— *Already Bereaved in Kansas*

**Dear Already Bereaved:** Everyone reacts differently after receiving a diagnosis like the one your friend received. Some people reach out for support, but a sizable number do the opposite. They “circle the wagons,” which may be what this man has done.

It would be interesting to know if his wife was aware of the message you were given, because from what she posted, she may not have been. I think it is time to reach out to her privately and ask her how you can be supportive — if only to her. And yes, when he passes you should pay your respects and offer condolences. Funerals are for the living.

**Dear Abby:** For the past few months I’ve been seeing a gentleman in his late 50s who lost his last girlfriend, “Vera,” in a tragic accident. Her death was less than a year ago and he is still grieving, which I respect and am not uncomfortable with. My beau has low self-esteem. He thinks the relationship he had with Vera made him a better person, and that without her he will be less so.

I understand his sorrow and that he needs more time to sort through his feelings but, if things work out with us, and we continue to see each other, I want to know how I can also make him feel like I’m helping him be a better person. He says it was “just the relationship they had” and that he doesn’t know how to put it into words.

I don’t want to replace Vera or copy her, but I do wish I could understand what she did to help him believe positive things about himself.

— *New Girlfriend in New Hampshire*

**Dear Girlfriend:** In order to understand that, it would be helpful to see if he can explain the reason for his low self-esteem. Was it hypercritical parents? Difficulty fitting in with peers that started when he was in school? Not receiving enough positive feedback in his youth?

Once you gain more insight, you may be able to find the answers you are looking for. Both partners in a relationship should use whatever attributes they have to make EACH OTHER feel positive. However, please recognize it should not be your responsibility to prop him up on a continuing basis.

Conspiracies

Continued from A1

California wildfires have been ripe for conspiracy for years, but Greene’s comments surface at a time when a sizable segment of the American population is treating false conjecture as fact — from armed people in Oregon on the lookout for so-called antifa members starting blazes to the mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol based on former President Donald Trump’s baseless claims of a rigged election.

Greene’s post speculated that former Gov. Jerry Brown, Pacific Gas & Electric, and Rothschild Inc. — an investment firm that has long been the target of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories accusing Jewish people of controlling global affairs — were involved. It also falsely claims that the blaze followed the path of California’s planned high-speed rail line.

Republican leaders have faced increasing pressure over their handling of Greene, who has been assigned to the House Education and Labor Committee. A representative for House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., did not respond to requests for comment.

Greene put out a statement Friday addressed to “the radical, left-wing Democrat mob and the Fake News media trying to take me out.”

“I will never back down,” she wrote. “I will never give up. ... More MAGA reinforcements are on the way.”

The Camp fire was sparked by PG&E electrical equipment, some of which was nearly 100 years old. The company pleaded guilty to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter in June.



Chris Kleponis/Sipa USA via TNS

**U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., yells at journalists as she passes through a newly installed metal detector outside the House Chamber.**

Skepticism toward government messaging isn’t new, and knocking down rumors has always been part of the job for crisis communicators. But now, in the age of social media, false information spreads like, well, wildfire and can be dangerous in real time when officials need to quickly share the facts about fast-moving crises.

“The one challenging aspect all fire departments, all government entities face is, the information we post is verified and ... there are times the general public is able to post something online that gets traction just based on their perception of what’s happening,” said Nick Schuler, a deputy fire chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

“If I were down at the beach today and posted ‘Hey, a giant wave took out the sea wall,’ you’d have several people re-sharing that information, posting it, probably before the city would be able to say ‘No, that’s not correct.’”

Schuler recalled getting a flurry of media inquiries in 2017 when people began to wrongly

connect a massive solar flare with wildfires in San Diego.

Last year, firefighting crews in Oregon encountered groups of people who were convinced that wildfires burning there were started by antifa. The people were stopping residents from moving on local roads and, in at least one case, prohibited firefighters from going onto their property to help set up a defensive position for oncoming flames.

When fires are extreme or wind-driven, their burn patterns can seem completely illogical to the uninitiated, and thus ripe for conspiracy as people try to make sense of what happened, said Jack Cohen, a wildfire expert and retired U.S. Forest Service firefighter.

The Carr Fire that burned in Shasta and Trinity counties in Northern California in 2018 seemed to char every inch of forest in some areas, but one or two homes would survive. During the Camp Fire later that year, much of the tree line remained intact, but homes tucked within them were destroyed.

Cohen said he first started hearing conspiracy theories about space-based directed-energy weapons after high-definition drone images showed the Camp Fire’s pattern of destruction. People he said, are “obsessively obsessed” with what causes wildfires and fill in the blanks when they can’t explain them.

While people are impressed by high-intensity big flames, he said, the reality is that many homes and structures are destroyed more slowly during wildfires by burning embers and low-intensity surface fires that linger in vegetation.

Anastasia and Daniel Skinner laughed when they heard Greene’s theory.

In early 2019, the couple were living in an RV on their scorched property. Money was tight as they paid for water, propane, gas and other necessities for their five young children — costs that amounted to more than their monthly mortgage for the home the fire destroyed.

Then, the RV was stolen. Another property the couple own in the area was being foreclosed. They had hoped settlement money from PG&E would help save that home, but they haven’t seen a dime.

To hear a politician from another state spreading rumors about the fire that upended their lives is “silly” and “annoying,” Anastasia said.

“There’s no way to prove lasers from space would have caused the fire,” Daniel said. “But she’s getting a lot of attention.”

Meanwhile, he said, victims and people who actually do help families like his don’t get enough of it.

YOUR HOROSCOPE *By Madalyn Aslan*

Stars show the kind of day you’ll have

★★★★★ DYNAMIC | ★★★★ POSITIVE | ★★★ AVERAGE | ★★ SO-SO | ★ DIFFICULT

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR MONDAY, FEB. 1, 2021:** Strong-willed, mentally quick and courageous, when you’re right, you won’t give an inch. This year, however, you work on a team, and patience creates a very successful and profitable project. If single, don’t be too anxious to please lovers. Your true soul mate comes along in May. If attached, you may be in a turbulent phase, but this smooths out soon. Then you are in bliss. LEO is super generous.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19)**

★★★★ The sky picture brings a sensitive and sentimental mood to love. Photos, scrapbook souvenirs and walks along the cold shore will delight someone you care for. Devote the day to love magic. You deserve it. Tonight: A socially distanced dinner date. Don’t be impulsive.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20)**

★★★★ Good health habits are a must today. Honor your body and serve healthy foods. An animal that strays to your door may belong to someone else. Don’t consider it a permanent part of your household until you find out. Tonight: Early beddie-byes.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20)**

★★★★ Today promises sparkles and surprises in matters of the heart. Significant meetings and partings can occur. You always enjoy a challenge in love situations and can lose interest in someone who is too complacent. Tonight: Make up your mind. Don’t think so much.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22)**

★★★★ Thoughts will center on home life and understanding family members. Avoid a change of residence. The move would prove unsatisfactory. Relatives can be entering new life stages, or a residence might need updating. Tonight: Be flexible. Conversations with and about relatives are revealing.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)**

★★★ Stay in familiar surroundings today. Vehicles can be unreliable or directions lost. Use care in communication during this time, for messages can be lost or misconstrued. Carrying a talisman of citrine for clarity can be most helpful. Tonight: The mental cobwebs are swept away.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)**

★★★★ Earning enough to pay for new treasures will absorb your attention today. Enjoy all that you have, rather than lamenting that which eludes you. You’ve been concerned about security. This trend will ebb. And your financial picture should grow promising. Tonight: Keep hope alive.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)**

★★★★ Your judgement is especially good today, so don’t go through the usual agony about making a decision. Your instincts will lead you to the right choices. A new home, job or relationship can replace the familiar. Tonight: The final message is that it’s time to grow.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)**

★★★★ Suddenly discretion is more important than usual. You will cherish your privacy today. You’ll be aware of the secret worries and needs of others. There are opportunities to be helpful, almost acting like a guardian angel to those less fortunate. Tonight: You impress yourself.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)**

★★★★ Follow through with networking. Blend business and pleasure today. Don’t take others for granted. Associates might not be as they first appear. Competitive situations are present. If you’re the winner in a conflict, be alert to the possibility of poor sportsmanship. Tonight: Relax.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)**

★★ You will be highly visible at work. Be aware of cycles and patterns in your social life. Friendships can impact your career. As 2021 gets underway, past life connections will become apparent in intimate relationships. Tonight: Expect a tense situation. Practice deep breathing.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)**

★★★★ Journeys of the mind as well as actual geographic wanderings will take you to new places in the future. Now, because of COVID, you cannot travel. But new concepts can broaden your outlook. Tonight: Reach out to a friend currently in a foreign land.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)**

★★★★ Life is full of sparkle, but resist the temptation to control. Recognize and respect synchronicity. Allow destiny to play her hand, and you will triumph. The veil to the afterlife will be especially transparent. Tonight: Loved ones on the other side can communicate quite clearly.

Virus aid

Continued from A1

The plea for Biden to give bipartisan negotiations more time comes as the president has shown signs of impatience as the more liberal wing of his party considers passing the relief package through a process known as budget reconciliation. That would allow the bill to advance with only the backing of his Democratic majority.

The Republicans did not provide many details of their proposal. One of the signatories, Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, said that it would cost about \$600 billion.

“If you can’t find bipartisan compromise on COVID-19, I don’t know where you can find it,” said Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, who also signed the letter.

But even as Biden extended the invitation to the Republican lawmakers, Psaki said that \$1,400 relief checks, substantial funding for reopening schools, aid to small businesses and hurting families, and more “is badly needed.”

“As leading economists have said, the danger now is not in doing too much: it is in doing too little,” Psaki said. “Americans of both parties are looking to their leaders to meet the moment.”

Biden also spoke on Sunday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who are facing a growing push from the more liberal Democratic members to move forward with Biden’s legislation with or without Republican support.

The other GOP senators invited to meet with Biden are Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Todd Young of Indiana, Jerry Moran of Kansas, Mike Rounds of South Dakota, and Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

Brian Deese, the top White House economic adviser who is leading the administration’s outreach to Congress, said earlier Sunday that administration officials were reviewing the letter. He did not immediately commit to a Biden meeting with the lawmakers.

But Cedric Richmond, a senior Biden adviser, said the president “is very willing to meet with anyone to advance the agenda.” When asked about the senators’ plan, Richmond said, “This is about seriousness of purpose.”

Deese indicated the White House could be open to negotiating on further limiting who would receive stimulus checks. Portman suggested the checks should go to individuals who

make no more than \$50,000 per year and families capped at \$100,000 per year.

Under the Biden plan, families with incomes up to \$300,000 could receive some stimulus money.

“That is certainly a place that we’re willing to sit down and think about, are there ways to make the entire package more

effective?” Deese said.

As a candidate, Biden predicted his decades in the Senate and his eight years as Barack Obama’s vice president gave him credibility as a deal-maker and would help him bring Republicans and Democrats to consensus on the most important matters facing the country.

But less than two weeks into

his presidency, Biden showed frustration with the pace of negotiations at a time when the economy exhibited further evidence of wear from the pandemic. Last week, 847,000 Americans applied for unemployment benefits, a sign that layoffs remain high as the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage.

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